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ABSTRACT

Government regulation of children's summer camps, particularly involving health and safety standards, is discussed in a series of brief interviews with camp directors and representatives of camp associations. Transcribed from the National Public Radio weekly broadcast, "Options in Education," the program includes a lengthy montage of children's voices, giving impressions of camp experiences. Interviews focus mainly on summer camp safety legislation. An official of the American Camping Association (ACA) discusses how parents should choose a child's camp, emphasizing the need for safety standards. Instances of fraud and misrepresentation in camp advertising are described by a day camp director. Comprehensive laws dealing with youth camp safety exist in only seven states, and nearly one-half of the states have no regulations concerning personal health and medical services. Although the ACA provides strict standards, only half the camps in the United States are ACA-accredited. Legislation to create a national camp safety standard was introduced into Congress ten years ago, but has not been enacted. A coalition formed to promote camp safety legislation, consisting largely of agency camps such as Boy and Girl Scouts and the YMCA, is described. Arguments critical of Federal regulation, presented by camp directors, cite over-regulation and imposition of inappropriate or unnecessary standards. A summer camp for retarded children and a combination remedial school and day camp are also described briefly. (BF)

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THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

TRANSCRIPT FOR PROGRAM SCHEDULED FOR BROADCAST

THE WEEK OF JULY 26, 1976

Program #39

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Options in Education

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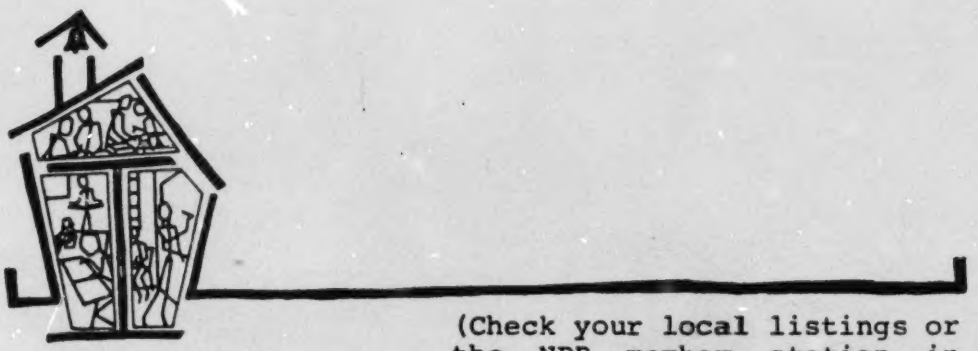

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SUMMER CAMP

Program #39

(OPENING MUSICAL THEME)

BLAIR: I'm Wendy Blair with NPR's OPTIONS IN EDUCATION.

OPTIONS IN EDUCATION is a news magazine about all the issues in education -- from the ABC's of preschool to the alphabet soup of government programs. If you've ever been to school, we have something that will interest you.

This week, Reporter Maxine Burns takes OPTIONS IN EDUCATION to summer camp.

(Reveille Bugle & Singing)

BURNS: Are you having a good time in camp?

CHILD: You bet.

BURNS: Why?

CHILD: I don't know -- it's just fun. It's about the best camp I ever went to.

CHILD: I like this camp. It's great!

CHILD: It's okay.

CHILD: I don't particularly love it.

BURNS: But why?

CHILD: Just some of the things aren't very pleasant.

CHILD: There's all kinds of neat stuff. I went water skiing, I went canoeing, I went sailing, I played baseball, I played soccer, I played tennis, and I ate dinner.

CHILD: They have a lot of nice things around here and a lot of nice people.

BURNS: Are you going to come back next year?

CHILD: If my mother can afford it.

(Singing & Bugle)

BURNS: What are you doing?

CHILD: I'm making a pair of nunchockus.

BURNS: What are nunchockus?

CHILD: They're an ancient Chinese weapon originally used to mash rice and then used to mash people.

BURNS: And what are you going to use yours to mash?

CHILD: People.

BURNS: What are you making?

CHILD: Just a card for the family -- a little joke card.

BURNS: What's it going to say?

CHILD: I can hardly wait to get home and sleep late.

TEACHER: Look at this through the light, or under the light, and if you see any rough spots, take it out with the emery cloth. And the object is to get that to look exactly like a drinking glass, the end of a drinking glass. It should be smooth, and it should be appealing to the eye. Is that clear?

CHILD: Yes.

TEACHER: Okay, you go over there and work, and don't come up until that's finished.

BURNS: What's it going to be when he gets done?

TEACHER: Well, it will be a copper tray that he's made out of rough metal.

BURNS: How long does it take to finish one?

TEACHER: The average boy can do one of those in four hours if he applies himself and isn't bothered too much.

BURNS: Are you an average boy who applied yourself?

CHILD: Yes.

BURNS: Are you going to be done in about four hours?

CHILD: I hope so.

CHILD: They're being put in the kiln.

BURNS: How do you know how to do it?

CHILD: You sift the enamel color on, and before that you lick it so that it sticks. And then, it goes in the oven.

BURNS: Do you have to wait long for it to cool off?

CHILD: About five minutes.

(MUSIC)

BURNS: What are you playing?

CHILD: Just an ordinary song.

BURNS: Can you play another one?

(PLAYS "ANCHORS AWEIGH")

BURNS: What happened -- did you give up?

CHILD: Yeah, I got a quarter of the way around the lake, and I fell four times.

BURNS: Is this the first year you've skied?

CHILD: Yeah.

CHILD: We've been canoeing.

BURNS: What did you learn?

CHILD: How to canoe the boat and turn and everything.

BURNS: Did you learn the jay stroke?

CHILD: Yes.

CHILD: I went sailing and then our runner broke.

BURNS: So, what did you do?

CHILD: So, we went row boating.

CHILD: We just caught some baby catfish.

BURNS: Oh, did you?

CHILD: Yeah, we were snorkeling.

COUNSELOR: They're little. We found a whole school of mama and papa catfish, I guess -- there must have been a thousand of these things.

BURNS: How big were they?

COUNSELOR: Just like this, about an inch long -- the parents were about a foot or so. They were staring us right in the face. They wouldn't back off or anything.

BURNS: What else have you found in here?

CHILD: Snails.

COUNSELOR: Yeah, snails, and we were looking for crayfish, also.

CHILD: We've seen a couple of bass.

COUNSELOR: Yeah, we've seen bass and lots of little fish around here and thousands of mussels.

CHILD: There must have been half a million. They're everywhere.

COUNSELOR: But, this is really a rare find. I have never seen anything like this before, and I've been in lakes lots of times.

BURNS: Do you have any snakes?

COUNSELOR: Not in the water. We caught some back on the land there the first day of camp, but we haven't seen any in the water. We caught a great big nine inch leech the other day -- the biggest one I've ever seen.

COUNSELOR: Oh, it's the worst trip I've ever taken in my life. And the mosquitoes, they congregate on your head, and they just wait for you to stick your little hooter out there to see what they can get. Look at my eyes.

You welcome, you guys. You should have heard the kids talking about dinner, talking about raw carrots and raw potatoes. John says, "You know, this goulash is great."

COUNSELOR: Try to crawl ducking your chin down just slightly, because you were rolling over on your right shoulder, which is slowing you down. Go ahead.

BURNS: What are you all standing here shivering for?

CHILD: We're going to go in the water.

BURNS: Why are you outside the water now?

CHILD: Because our buddies, they have to check out - they have to take showers.

(WHISTLE)

COUNSELOR: Would all swimmers please report to the beach on the double? Hurry up -- let's go. Come on -- let's go, hustle.

COUNSELOR: Diane's class -- Jeff's class -- whatever, let's go. Wash your fannies off, and let's go. Hurry up.

CHILD: I'm 13.

COUNSELOR: Go.

CHILD: 09.

COUNSELOR: Go.

CHILD: 010.

COUNSELOR: Go.

CHILD: 7.

COUNSELOR: Go. Thank you. Next class -- let's go, you guys.

(Bugle)

CHILD: Hello.

BUPNS: Hello, what are you doing?

CHILD: Setting the table.

BURNS: How did you get this job?

CHILD: It's her job, but I just came down to help her.

BURNS: Do you like setting the table?

CHILD: It's pretty fun. I like to get the same color plates and different color cups and different color bowls, and stuff like that.

BURNS: What's the menu today?

COOK: We have a boiled dinner today -- corned beef, boiled potatoes, and boiled carrots.

BURNS: How do you decide what to feed all these people three times a day?

COOK: Well, we get together, and it's really hard. We try to give them a variety of three weeks without repeating it. So, we go from corned beef, roast beef, and pot roast. And it's plain cooking because there are so many kinds of kids. We have Jewish kids and Catholic kids and all that, so we try to keep it down so everybody will be happy.

BURNS: Is the biggest meal at lunch?

COOK: Yeah.

BURNS: Why?

COOK: I don't know. For me, it wouldn't be -- see, they eat -- then they have time off, and they go to bed. And that's what they want. They want their dinner at noon and their lunch at night.

BURNS: How many people do you feed at a sitting?

COOK: We feed 355 right now, and it takes about 20 minutes to feed them and get them out of the dining hall.

BURNS: What's for dessert?

COOK: At noon we usually have fruits, pudding, or jello. We have the big dessert for dinner -- for tonight, we have peanut butter cookies -- it's a heavier dessert for tonight.

BURNS: What do you like best?

COOK: Everything -- you have to, you know, to work in a kitchen.

COUNSELOR: Grace, you going to sing the doxology?

(Everybody sings doxology)

(More Singing)

COUNSELOR: Order for today: This afternoon rest hour will end with a bugle call. At that time, in the craft shop, those campers who have projects to complete, please go to the craft shop and complete your projects. There are campers who have clay work to be fired -- please come to the craft shop after rest period to glaze your clay product.

Also, campers who have copper work that has to be soldered, please pick it up during your free time this afternoon.

If you are assigned to go horseback riding or water skiing, please go when scheduled.

(More Singing)

NURSE: Your father wants a doctor to see you, okay?

CHILD: Yeah.

NURSE: We'll bring you in this afternoon with two of the girls.

NURSE: How do your feet look?

CHILD: I don't know -- I haven't looked at them lately.

NURSE: Cathy, what does Dr. Jones want on these?

NURSE: Okay, you better come up and soak them tonight. We'll put some more cream on them.

NURSE: Are you going swimming this afternoon?

CHILD: No.

NURSE: Okay -- you can soak them during rest hour.

NURSE: Okay, you got them any place else?

CHILD: No.

NURSE: Okay, off you go.

CHILD: We can read books and things, but we can't -- well, we can only really be quiet -- that's all -- rest and things.

BURNS: What book are you reading right now?

CHILD: I can't read a book right now.

BURNS: Why not?

CHILD: Well, yesterday we weren't very quiet.

BURNS: You being punished?

CHILD: A little bit.

BURNS: What happened yesterday?

CHILD: We giggled a lot, and we walked around a lot -- we were reading and stuff. And we giggled and we talked aloud and stuff, so we just can't do anything now.

BURNS: When do you read your book?

CHILD: During rest hour mostly.

BURNS: Do you ever read with your flashlight at night?

CHILD: Sometimes.

BURNS: Is that against the rules?

CHILD: I don't know.

BURNS: What are you reading?

CHILD: I'm reading a book about puppy stories. I'm on the second page of it. I just started. There was this boy that lost his puppy and, then, he found it.

(Singing)

CHILD: Dear Mother and Father -- I have to get some things: one fishing rod, change of hooks, change of line -- Barclay Fishing Rods makes that. I'm doing fine, Mother. I'm eating well. How are you doing? Are you okay? Are you fine?

CHILD: Dear Mom and Dad -- The food is okay. How are you? I have sent my clothes to the laundry. What are you doing? I miss you very much. I am a little homesick, but not very much.

Can you send me a care package? If so, this is what I want: Some more comics and some candy and some books. Love, Kiss-Hug, Kiss-Hug, Kiss-Hug, Nancy

BURNS: What does yours say?

CHILD: Dear Mom and Dad.

BURNS: What are you going to write now?

CHILD: I'm going to write about my finger and my head. The other day I got hit in the head by baseball.

BURNS: What happened to your finger?

CHILD: It got sprained. It got snapped. It got snagged in a shirt, and I pushed away, and he pushed away, and it got snagged in it and sprained.

BURNS: Is that why your handwriting is so funny?

CHILD: Yeah.

CHILD: Dear Lynn -- Hi Honey. How are you doing? Everybody here is fine. We'll be up to get you Saturday morning. Are you having a good time? Have you done a lot of swimming? I bet you've got a good suntan by now. Wait till you see how big your watermelon and pumpkin has grown. It's awful hot here today. We miss you, and can't wait to see you. Of course, we'll take you out to dinner Saturday. We want to hear all about camp. In the meantime, enjoy the next few days and have a good time. Be a good girl, honey. Love, Mommy. P.S. -- Sleepy says hi! That's my turtle.

(PIANO MUSIC)

MAN: When are showers?

WOMAN: Tonight.

MAN: Okay, showers. And, then, Thursday, ice cream. Saturday night, the dance. Sunday, we've got the movie. Ah, what's coming this week? "The Absent Minded Professor" -- I think that's the one. Okay, what about a swimming night some night next week, early?

WOMAN: Okay.

MAN: Okay, we don't have the days off and everything set up for after Sunday. Do you want to schedule Monday night for a swim, try to do it up?

WOMAN: Yeah, I hope to have a day off next week.

WOMAN: When are you going to give physicals?

MAN: All right, I'll make a deal with you.

WOMAN: When are you going to give physicals?

MAN: One of the requirements of working at Camp Huggins is that staff gets physicals.

MAN: I know, but the thing is I could pay twenty bucks this summer to have my physical to come here. Then, I pay another twenty to have my physical for school.

MAN: Well, have the same physical.

MAN: All right, that's what I'm waiting for. I've got to have my papers for school.

MAN: Don't get excited -- you're going to get them. Is that all right?

WOMAN: No, it's not all right, because you haven't told me when you're going to do this.

MAN: I don't know when the papers are going to come from school.

WOMAN: They're probably going to come the first week in September, and I think that's a little late, don't you?

MAN: Well, when you're lying down, unconscious, and we don't know whether you're allergic or not to penicillin.

MAN: I have no allergies.

WOMAN: I don't care.

MAN: I'm ready to fill one of those out.

WOMAN: We will not go out of here on a day off next week unless you take care of the physicals. It's getting to the point where I'm threatening.

MAN: All right.

(Bugle)

CHILD: I like soccer. Water skiing I just learned, and I got up, and it was great.

CHILD: I like sailing the best.

BURNS: What do you like?

CHILD: Swimming.

BURNS: What else?

CHILD: Sometimes nature.

CHILD: Canoeing.

CHILD: I like everything, but I don't like tennis too much.

BURNS: How about you? You on your way to tennis?

CHILD: No, I'm going to archery next.

INSTRUCTOR: That was a good shot, Amy. Okay, go get your arrows.

CHILD: That looks like it's right in the middle.

INSTRUCTOR: Okay, go get your arrows.

CHILD: Catfish Hunter up. STRIKE 1 -- STRIKE 2.

INSTRUCTOR: This is throwing out tennis balls to the campers across the net.

INSTRUCTOR: Can you show her the V in the hand? -- she's not holding it correctly.

INSTRUCTOR: Hold it like that -- so you can see the V.

CHILD: Oh, neat.

INSTRUCTOR: Put your hands further down like that, and when you swing, put your shoulder into the net, and bring it forward -- okay?

INSTRUCTOR: When the ball's coming, you guys are breaking your wrists and you're dipping. It's going to just go up in the air. You want it to go over the net, you know, about two or three or five inches. You're going over about twenty feet. Don't take your eye off the ball. A lot of you are missing it and spinning around in circles. Okay, you're going all the way around.

INSTRUCTOR: Two at the front, then, two in the middle and two at the back. You can serve first. Okay, you ready then?

CHILD: Yeah.

INSTRUCTOR: You want to try a flip, a knee flip, or a chicken flip? Well, it's when you land on your knees and do a flip -- chicken, because you're not all the way up. Come on. All right, you balance, then you drop to your knees. You take your arms and you flip-tuck, and you go right over. Okay, good.

(PIANO MUSIC)

(CHEERING)

MAN: You get to the top?

CHILD: We went up there after supper.

MAN: You made it all the way?

CHILD: Yeah.

MAN: You still got dessert on your face.

CHILD: It was six hours going up hill with 12 pounds on your back.

MAN: Well, you guys are just making it, because we're eating in about ten minutes. Why don't you park your gear at the big rock.

How was the chow and the cooking?

CHILD: It's all right.

CHILD: We were going at a rate of a half a mile an hour.

CHILD: We crossed more rivers than we climbed mountains.

MAN: Rick, pick me four mountain climbers -- take the colors down.

Oh, you guys look grubby.

(Bugle)

MAN: Let's have supper.

(Child Sings McDonald Song)

MAN: You're in charge of handing me the hamburgers. You're in charge of helping him to hand me the hamburgers. Okay? Joe, do you have anything to be in charge of yet? Okay, you're in charge of calling them out and counting up orders and coming up with the first burgers. Okay, Jay, you're in charge of taking the first orders -- cheeseburger or hamburger.

CHILD: All right, everybody ask me what they want.

BURNS: What are you having for dinner?

CHILD: Hamburgers.

BURNS: What else?

CHILD: Cheeseburgers, potato chips, and bug juice.

BURNS: Why are all your sleeping bags outside?

CHILD: 'Cause we're having a sleepout.

BURNS: Oh, you are. How's dinner.

CHILD: Good.

BURNS: And what are you going to do after dinner?

CHILD: I don't know.

BURNS: It will be too early to go to sleep, won't it?

CHILD: Yeah.

COUNSELOR: Mrs. White sat up, and she looked at her husband, and she said, "A paw -- let's use the monkey's paw." And her husband looked at her and said, "What are you talking about? What are we going to do now?" She says, "The paw -- we can get Brian back -- take the paw and make a wish and wish for Brian to come back to us." Mr. White looked at her and says, "Woman, you're mad -- the boy fell into the saw blades. He was all cut up. He's dead. He's buried -- how can you do this?" She said, "Never mind -- you wish -- I want my son back."

And, finally, Mr. White went back to the mantel and, once again, he picked up that silk cloth with the monkey's paw in it, and he held it high in his left hand, and he said, "I wish my son Brian were alive again." And, again, he shut it, and he said, "It did it -- it did it again -- it moved."

It was about midnight as they were tossing fitfully, and just like now, another shower storm had started. And off in the distance they could hear thunder and the little flashes of lightening. And, then, there was another sound that could be heard. It wasn't a sound from the storm, and it wasn't a sound that they knew, but what they heard was something dragging -- something scraping, seeming to come closer and closer up the front walk of their house.

(Child sings "Yankee Doodle" -- but with different words)

BURNS: How was the band?

CHILD: The boys weren't very cute. And most of them that were, they were all short.

A girl in my cabin -- she went to the dance last night, and she met this kid, and everybody was after him, you know, except for me, because I was taller than him. She wrote him a letter this morning, and she sprayed perfume on it.

BURNS: How is it to be a boy working in an all girls camp?

COUNSELOR: Ah, it's pretty good. It's like a super ego trip. There's about 300 campers, and you know at least one of them is in love with you.

BURNS: So, how do you deal with it?

COUNSELOR: See, here at camp, we have an awkward situation, like if we're caught down in the division or something with a camper, we can get really screwed. So, you know, if you want to talk to a camper or something, you have to be really sneaky about it.

CHILD: Running through the forest, she reached her roadster and sprang in. Nancy Drew pressed her foot hard upon the gasoline pedal. Ordinarily, Nancy was not a very fast driver. But now she knew that much depended on her speed. Nancy Drew was a brave little girl and was too intent upon preventing the man's escape to consider seriously the danger which she might be running into herself.

Presently, on a distant hill, Nancy caught the gleam of a headlight. Another automobile was coming toward her. "I'll stop those people and ask if they passed a racing car," she decided upon on a sudden impulse. Bringing her automobile to an abrupt halt in the middle of the road, she signaled for the approaching car to stop. It was a brown sedan, and as it came within the range of her headlights, Nancy thought there was something familiar about it.

The automobile came to a stop not far from her roadster. "Hello there," a voice called out. "What's the matter?" With a start, Nancy Drew recognized the voice.

CHILD: What if everybody has like a one-line poem?

CHILD: That's boring.

CHILD: Why can't we do little poems on different things?

CHILD: Can everybody make up their own poems?

CHILDREN IN UNISON: No. (Some yeahs.)

(Bugle - "Taps")

CHILD: Can we talk now?

BLAIR: A Day at Camp — prepared by Reporter Maxine Burns who's with me in the studio. Sounds like a wonderful assignment, Maxine.

BURNS: I had a really great time. The thing that really got me were the bright faces and the bright eyes and the big smiles and the laughing and the singing. I heard a thousand songs.

BLAIR: How did you manage lugging a tape recorder up hill and down dale and into boats, and things like that? I'm always worried about getting my tape recorder wet.

BURNS: It was hard. It was heavy.

BLAIR: You have a few serious things to talk about in connection with camp, I think -- they're not all just great, happy things.

BURNS: Yes, that's true. Camps are carefree places for kids, to be sure, but parents have to be careful about choosing a camp.

BLAIR: There are a lot of camps in America, between ten and twelve thousand of them -- and a lot of different kinds of camps -- religious camps, Girl Scout camps, tennis camps, "fat" camps. How do you match the camp with the kid?

Maxine put this question to Alan Stolz, Legislative Chairman for the American Camping Association and Director of one of the camps she visited.

ALAN STOLZ

STOLZ: I think first you have to find out what it is that you're seeking for your child -- how self-sufficient is the child. What are the child's needs? What are the child's interests? Not a parent's vicarious interests -- you want to see him in the all-star tennis thing or the all-star sport, or the great ballet dancer. But, what are the child's legitimate interests, and what do you want to expose the youngster to? And, then, you start a match-making game. It takes time. You should be picking a camp almost with the same kind of consideration you'd think of if you picked a good private school or college.

Then, you have to do some real thorough checking up. If you cannot visit and see the place personally, you certainly ought to meet with key people who are going to run it. Or see pictures, slides, movies -- whatever they have that are up to date. Just don't pick it from a catalog or an ad. And, of course, obviously, the first thing -- is the camp professionally credited. This is one of the main things, if it's a member or an approved camp of the American Camping Association, which means it has been examined by trained, knowledgeable camp people.

We are concerned that a youngster also has, in addition to exposure to new things, an opportunity to spend more time on his favorites. In other words, a free expression on the boy's or the girl's part.

And, finally, because we are talking about camping, we do want to see some exposure to the out-of-doors, not just sports on concrete, but to try to develop some kind of fundamental appreciation about what the country itself is like.

BURNS: American Camping Association official, Alan Stolz. Once the family decides what kind of camp the child will attend, there are two major hurdles to be faced. The first is that the parents want to be assured of the child's safety, obviously. And, secondly, as consumers, parents want to be sure that the child's getting everything that's promised. Stolz told me that a good guide is American Camping Association Accreditation.

BLAIR: But that may not be enough. Gilbert Giuliana, an active member of the Maryland State Camping Association, says that fraudulent camps exist. They even sometimes use the ACA seal when it hasn't been earned. Giuliana describes a brochure he received from one such camp.

GILBERT GIULIANI

GIULIANI: Well, the fact is the camp does not have facilities of its own, other than a building. And in all of the pictures here, this camp has never been open. So, obviously, all the pictures here are posed.

BURNS: How do you find out about these violators?

GIULIANI: Unfortunately, there are no governing laws to protect people against these violators. Sending things through the mail is fraudulent, if the mail then picks them up. Many of these things are not sent through the mail. They're hand delivered or delivered through other mediums. The only way you can find out about it is going to the facility and saying, "Hey, where is your pool -- I don't see one."

With the camps that don't belong to ACA it's very difficult to tell what the situation is, because there are no laws -- except for the swimming pool -- we do have a swimming pool inspector. We have a barn license, but the inspector comes occasionally from the state, without any kind of regularity. We have the regular health and fire inspector for your buildings, if they exist. But other than that, you have nobody talking about programs-to-people ratio, what the quality of the camp counselor is, how old they have to be -- all these things. Many camps don't have anything.

BURNS: Camping is really a big business is it not?

GIULIANI: Yes, there's an awful lot of money that changes hands in the camping field. In the State of Maryland there are in excess of 300 camps, and each camp would probably have an average in excess of 100 children a day. And with an average fee, you run somewhere in the neighborhood of forty or fifty dollars -- it's a lot of money passing hands every week for these children who are attending camp.

And, in addition to that, some of the agency camps are supported by the United Givers Fund and various other charitable organizations. So, it really becomes a big business proposition in many cases.

BLAIR: Gilbert Giuliani, Director of a Maryland day camp.

BURNS: As Giuliani pointed out, there are no laws governing the quality of camps, and at last count, only seven states in the country had comprehensive laws dealing with youth camp safety. Nearly half the states have no regulations concerning personal health, medical aid and medical services. The American Camping Association has stringent standards, but only half the existing camps are ACA accredited.

BLAIR: That's why ten years ago legislation was introduced in the Congress to create a national standard for camp safety. But, so far, Congress has not passed it. Ellen Hoffman, Staff Director of Senator Walter Mondale's Subcommittee on Children and Youth, tells Maxine that this law is badly needed.

ELLEN HOFFMAN

HOFFMAN: It's clear that the existing laws simply are not protecting children. There is one horror story after another about kids who are inadequately supervised -- kids who are swimming in areas where they don't have the proper safety requirements -- kids who are being taken in transportation vehicles that are not even licensed or by people who have lost their driver's license.

There are no, unfortunately, very good statistics on the number of kids who actually are hurt or become ill or are killed, in fact, by these kinds of things. But, there are the stories, and it's clear that it's occurring, and it's clear that there have been cases where these incidents have occurred. And they have been covered up and allowed never to come out, because the camps were trying to protect their own interests.

BURNS: This bill has been around now for ten years, and it hasn't seemed to go any place.

HOFFMAN: I agree with you -- it's been a long time, and it's very sad that nothing more has happened. We came very, very close about a year ago to getting something moving, and then, somehow, the thing just faltered again. It didn't have the push that it needed from the grassroots level to really get through.

But I think we're going to have to reassess the situation in the new Congress and get a feeling whether there are people who feel strongly that this is important and necessary, and if so, try to move ahead with it.

BURNS: Most of the criticism that I've heard of this Youth Camp Safety Bill concerns the fact that there's going to be so many levels of bureaucracy imposed on the camps that they aren't going to be able to function.

HOFFMAN: I think that there are basic concerns about red tape and bureaucracy and how they might affect camps, and I think they're legitimate. But we've tried very, very hard to place the incentives in this legislation on the states to develop their own programs that are appropriate to the states and to provide an opportunity for the camp people to come in and say that this is not appropriate, or this is the way it ought to be done instead. And it's written in such a way that there should be, I would think, a minimum of details and paper work and red tape under those conditions. It's only in a case where a state absolutely refuses whatsoever to do anything about camp safety that there would be any relationship with the federal government.

BURNS: I would believe that most camps that belong to the ACA or the Scouts, or the major respected camping organizations in the country, would really have no problems whatsoever with any of the type of legislation or standards anticipated under this law. I think they would probably come right in and qualify, and it would just be a matter of form for them. We are particularly concerned about the operators that are not tied into these sorts of organizations, that have no way at all of proving that they are, in fact, providing safe and healthy conditions and for which a parent has no way of determining if they are doing so.

BURNS: Thank you, Ellen Hoffman, Staff Director of the Senate Subcommittee on Children and Youth.

BLAIR: Opposition to the proposed law comes from some private camp owners who feel that meeting federal regulations may eat into profits. And some church groups who operate on a shoestring budget fear that paying for sophisticated safety equipment may be beyond their means. Still others see this bill as just another example of the federal government overstepping its bounds. But the proposed Children and Youth Camp Safety Act has supporters. Maxine spoke with Kathleen Ross, Washington Representative of the Girl Scouts.

KATHLEEN ROSS

ROSS: The coalition for the camp safety legislation came together a couple of years ago, and it consists of the American Camping Association, the Girl Scouts, the Boy Scouts, the Boys Clubs and Girls Clubs, Campfire Girls, YMCA, YWCA, Red Cross Youth, and several others who were very concerned with how the Youth Camp Safety legislation was developing at the federal level.

BURNS: You have this whole list of groups that are sort of the heart of American youth -- the Boy Scouts and the Girl Scouts and the Y's -- all favoring this legislation. And, yet, it doesn't seem to be able to move.

ROSS: I guess I can only say that we are concerned. We have not undertaken a massive letter writing campaign to the Hill. We have responded when called upon by the House or the Senate to testify, or to give facts and figures, but we have not gone out on a great lobbying effort. We are not lobbying organizations. Basically, the feeling out in the field is that, yes, there is need for some sort of uniform standard, that it could best be undertaken at the state level, but the states on their own are not picking up on this. So, absent the states doing it on their own, the federal initiative would be most welcome.

BURNS: Kathleen Ross, National Representative for the Girl Scouts of the USA in Washington, D.C.

BLAIR: So, the biggest problem surrounding federal regulations for camps may be inertia. Camp safety just isn't a very high priority with the U.S. Congress now. But a Health, Education & Welfare study based on the summer of 1973 found that 25 children died at camp, over 1400 were injured, and 1200 suffered serious illness.

BURNS: The problem with those figures, Wendy, is that they're three years old. And HEW itself admits that they're inadequate, because they were based on voluntary reporting from camp directors. So, it's safe to assume that some camp directors who had a child die in their camp probably didn't participate in the survey.

I spoke with several camp directors who belong to organizations that support the bill. Some are discouraged, though, because they believe camps need regulation, some aren't sure if they do or not, and some are downright opposed. Alan Stolz, Director of a New Hampshire camp, told me there's been a lot of wasted time and effort.

ALAN STOLZ

STOLZ: Ten years is right -- a tremendous amount of waste, just utter waste of taxpayer money, as well as the poor limited funds of our volunteer organization. And it has just died completely down there in Washington. And, then, there is one other trouble, and that is that this thing is tied to a 7 1/2 million dollar budget a year for at least five years, after which they might want to take another look at it and see how important it really is.

And the President, and through his Administration -- HEW -- they have said it's not necessary. They see no great urgent need for it, and President Ford is committed to austerity. And unless there's an overwhelming Congressional demand, I would presume he'd veto it. And if there's no ACA membership and no state law, then a parent is up for grabs, because unless you happen to find a quality operation, you just don't know. It could be good -- it could not be good.

BLAIR: Alan Stolz, Camp Director and Legislative Chairman for the American Camping Association. Zaven Vorperian is a YMCA official in New Hampshire. He believes that camp directors have not been allowed to participate fully enough in the formulation of federal guidelines.

ZAVEN VORPERIAN

VORPERIAN: No, I'm not against standards. Nobody's against safety. I mean, after all, you can't fight motherhood. But I think what we're upset about is that people who don't know what camping is all about are making rules for us. I think we should be involved in those rules. You know, people are going to get hurt on a trampoline. There are high-risk kinds of sports and activities, but we don't want our children to grow up and stay in bed all their lives, and be protected by four walls.

On the other hand, what is safety? How do you judge what is right and what is wrong? Now, certainly, we want life jackets, we want the proper safety standards and rules, but we don't want to price ourselves out of business, either.

BLAIR: Zaven Vorperian, Director of a YMCA camp in New Hampshire.

BURNS: Drew Friedman is Director of a private boys camp and is opposed to more regulation.

DREW FRIEDMAN

FRIEDMAN: I've been spending several days trying to get my water ski boats operating, because the inspector comes in from the state, and he tells me that I have to have a different life jacket than I've got, and my fire extinguisher isn't secured properly, and my rear light doesn't work. And, so then, I don't have water skiing for a day, and he comes back the next day or two days later. And in the meantime, my program is tied up, and I can't operate until he says I may.

I have a health department that comes in here, and they look over the situation in the kitchen and the dining room. And they test the water, and then, they give me a permit to operate, if everything checks out.

BURNS: So, you're saying you're over regulated.

FRIEDMAN: Well, I don't know about over or under, but I have a number of people who are having a say about what I may and may not do in camp, not to mention the fact that if I don't have my tennis courts in top-notch condition, my parents have something to say to me about them. If my waterfront is sloppy, and I don't have a waterfront director who is doing his job and a waterfront staff who are doing their job, the parents have something to say to me.

And the parents have something to say to me about all activities and departments in camp, if I'm not right on top of everything that's happening.

BURNS: Would you oppose federal standards?

FRIEDMAN: Absolutely.

BLAIR: Private camp director, Drew Friedman. The federal legislation probably won't be going anywhere for a while. Meanwhile, eight to ten million kids go off to camp each summer.

BURNS: If they don't get hurt or sick or worse, the experience will be worthwhile, as Drew Friedman told me when I asked him to list the benefits of camp.

DREW FRIEDMAN

FRIEDMAN: Giving the child or the parent an opportunity for that child to be away from home and away from his parents, to stand on his own two feet and make his own decisions, and to have to become responsible for those decisions -- the decision to participate or not participate -- the decision to say something positive or negative to a bunkmate -- the decision to be responsive to the counselor or to be aggressive toward the counselor -- or to handle all those infinite number of situations that come up from day to day, where he has to verbalize and find those words with which to deal with the situation at hand.

The opportunity to learn new skills in a way that it is not available to them at home -- the opportunity to develop a close relationship with an adult, which is almost non-existent in his home situation. His teachers he's most unlikely to get close to. There will almost never be another adult in a child's life, including his parents, where he can establish that kind of closeness, that kind of rapport that he really can feel that he's a part of this adult's world.

And, of course, the opportunity to develop a closeness with his peers in a way that he never can anywhere else, because of his round-the-clock living situation.

BURNS: What would you be doing if you weren't at camp?

CHILD: Reading books.

CHILD: At home, doing nothing.

CHILD: I would be swimming, playing with my friends, and going shopping with my mother.

CHILD: I'd be sitting in my own backyard. When I go in the house, I'll have to listen to my brother who will be screaming for something. That's why I like camp.

BURNS: To get away from your brother?

CHILD: Yeah, I hate going for him. My mother, she's always doing for him. Everything in the house is for him to play with. I don't like anything in the house any more.

BURNS: Do you think all kids should go to camp?

CHILD: Yeah.

BURNS: Why?

CHILD: Well, where we live the kids play around in the streets, and cars sometimes go down the road real fast. And if they go to camp, they don't have to bother with trucks and cars.

BURNS: Why should kids go to camp?

CHILD: To have a good time -- meet new friends.

COUNSELOR: First of all, it gives the parents a rest and second of all, it gives the kids a chance to do things that they couldn't do at home, like I don't have a lake at home.

BLAIR: Maxine, how did the whole idea of camp get started anyway? Is it sort of nostalgia about the American Indian way of life, Rousseau's romantic view of nature, or an escape from the city?

BURNS: Well, it may be surprising, but it actually started with the Civil War. It became fashionable around that time for young boys to imitate the soldiers and take their blanket roles and go out and pitch tents in the woods. Organized camping began around that time in the 1860's when a school in Connecticut made two-week campouts a regular part of the school program.

BLAIR: Agency camps, like YMCA or Scouts, and church camps make up two-thirds of youth camping in America. The other third are private camps run for profit. Specialty clinics like tennis camps or weight loss programs make up about two percent. So, most children should be able to find the camp to suit them.

BURNS: That is, if they can afford the price of a bus ticket or a suitcase. David Selvin spoke to kids in Washington, D.C. who have never been to camp.

DAVID SELVIN TALKING TO KIDS IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

SELVIN: Would you like to go to summer camp?

CHILD: Uh huh.

SELVIN: Why is that?

CHILD: Because I have neve been there before.

SELVIN: If you could close your eyes and think about what summer camp looks like, what would you think it looks like? Describe it to me.

CHILD: People making a tent, so they could start fishing, like if they want to sleep out there and wait till tomorrow to start fishing, too.

CHILD: Summer camp is fun. You could swim in the water -- there'd be no fish, no sharks.

CHILD: At night when people have fun and enjoy being outside with Mother Nature.

CHILD: Camping out, because that's great, with all the cookouts, hikes, and all that, and riding horses.

CHILD: I think it's about like you going somewhere that you know you've never been before, and if you think it's a good place, well, it is a good place to be.

SELVIN: Do you like spending the summer here in Washington?

CHILD: I live here.

CHILD: I play dice.

SELVIN: What are dices?

CHILD: Dices are putting money up on the table.

SELVIN: Have you ever slept outside in a sleeping bag?

CHILD: I've done that in Philadelphia, but I ain't had no tent, and so, I slept by myself on the porch. I made the mistake and went to sleep on the porch, and my aunt had to come out there and get me.

CHILD: I would like to play tennis and get in on the sports and go camping and go around the world, and enjoy most of Mother Nature's work. And I'd like to be an artist and have art.

BURNS: David Selvin, talking to kids in Washington, D.C.

BLAIR: Poverty isn't the only barrier to getting into a summer camp. What if the child has some kind of a disability?

BRIGHTMAN: (Singing) Eensy beensy spider goes up the water . . .

JIMMY: Down.

BRIGHTMAN: Down comes the rain to wash the spider . . .

JIMMY: Out.

BRIGHTMAN: Out comes the sun to dry up all the rain and the . . .

JIMMY: Eeensy weensy spider goes . . .

BRIGHTMAN: Out the spout again. That a boy.

BLAIR: Camp Counselor Richard Brightman, and a boy named Jimmy at a camp for retarded children who have severe behavioral problems. Camp Freedom is unique because the child's parents, teachers, brothers and sisters spend some time at camp, too. And while the children have fun, the family is learning skills to help their child when they all go home.

RICHARD BRIGHTMAN & STEPHEN HINSHAW

BRIGHTMAN: Basically, what we're trying to do is plan 45 different individual programs for our 45 kids here — and group the kids wherever appropriate according to their skill level, so that, first period we have eleven classes with an average of about four kids in each. Some of the classes are more individualized for academics or language. Some of the other classes would be in play skills, or arts and crafts.

And what's important with the classes is what's being worked on aside from the thing that's being made, or the content that's being given -- the skills of sitting in a group -- paying attention -- following directions. These are skills that a lot of our kids lack, and we're going to try to structure all their activities and reward their doing such skills, which should make life a lot better for them back in the Fall.

HINSHAW: I think if you look around you will notice that the camp doesn't look like a special camp. It's got woods and tents and trees, and it looks more than anything else like a camp for kids. And that's the intention. And, also, for each kid's daily schedule we try to strike a balance between in-class, academically oriented kinds of content and outside recreational group kinds of activity, like swimming and sports. And, typically, when you think of those kinds of things, you don't think of things that have to be intentionally taught. You think of them as skills that somehow kids were almost born into the world knowing how to do. That's not the case with our kids.

BLAIR: Richard Brightman and Stephen Hinshaw, Directors of Camp Freedom for Retarded Children in New Hampshire. Summer camps for children with disabilities are rare, but they do exist.

BURNS: Kids who don't have disabilities, but may have made bad grades, usually don't get to go to camp at all. They're in summer school. But an elementary school teacher in Madison, Wisconsin combines the best of both worlds. Rick Kloiber directs a day camp that teaches reading, writing and arithmetic. Jay Fitz of member station WHA asked Kloiber how it all began.

RICK KLOIBER

KLOIBER: I basically did it on my own, because I saw a need for it, because I saw the school system cutting out programs for elementary students due to the budgetary problems. And there wasn't much available. There's individual tutoring, which is extremely expensive, and I kind of saw this as filling the gap, and I took some time on my own, and put the program together -- which took a year. Every day there will be a project that the students will work on that will be geared to some outdoor activity. One of the week's activities will be mapping, and each day they'll be making some kind of instrument-mapping tool -- a range finder, a height finder, a small transom made out of juice cans that includes measuring and math. And, then, the use of those items also includes math, science, and measuring. And, so, by doing a basic project that's geared to the outdoors, it will get the mixture that I think is good. I think it's kind of nice to get learning and school-type activities out of the school.

BLAIR: Rick Kloiber, talking with Jay Fitz of member station WHA in Madison, Wisconsin.

Maxine, I want to ask you something. What are the things you remember most from when you were a little girl at camp?

BURNS: I remember my fears of things in the lake, and there were stories that the year before one girl had come out with a snake on her back. What do you remember about camp, Wendy?

BLAIR: Starving all the time -- starving, starving, starving. But, overall, Maxine, what do you say? Summer camp's pretty good.

BURNS: It's pretty good.

BLAIR: Thanks so much for being with us.

BURNS: I really enjoyed it -- thanks, Wendy.

BLAIR: Reports for this program came from Jay Fitz of station WHA in Madison, Wisconsin and David Selvin in Washington.

A Day at Camp was prepared by Maxine Burns -- special thanks to the campers and staff of Camps Calumet, Cody, Freedom, Huckins, and Robin Hood on Ossipee Lake in New Hampshire and Camp Potomac in Maryland.

BURNS: What would you be doing if you weren't in camp?

CHILD: Reading books.

CHILD: At home doing nothing.

CHILD: I would be swimming, playing with my friends, and going shopping with my mother.

(Children Singing)

BLAIR: If you'd like a transcript of this program, send 25 cents to National Public Radio - Education, Washington, D.C. 20036. Cassettes cost $4.00. Ask for Program No. 39.

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This program is produced by Jo Ellyn Rackleff. The Executive Producer is John Merrow. For OPTIONS IN EDUCATION, I'm Wendy Blair.

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